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## Neurological stamp

### The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Joan Deyman, by Rembrandt (1606-69)

On the 8 November 1723 the greater part of this painting was destroyed by fire. The dead man in the picture was Joris Fonteijn, known as black Jan, a thief condemned to death on 27 January 1656, and buried on 2 February. That year Rembrandt was commissioned by the surgeons' guild to paint The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Joan Deyman, the same year he applied for *cessio bonorum*, a form of bankruptcy.

As was usual in such dissections, Deyman has removed the stomach and intestines before beginning the dissection of the brain. The top of the skull is held by the assistant, Gysbrecht Matthijsz Calcoen, a master of the Amsterdam guild of surgeons, and Deyman is in the course of removing the falx cerebri of the dura mater.

This painting was to be placed in the Anatomy Theatre in Amsterdam which was constructed in 1639 in the attic storey of a small meat market building that was used until 1690. The records of the Anatomy Theatre in Amsterdam state that "on January 28th 1656, there was punished Joris Fonteijn of Diest, who by the worshipful lords of the law court was granted to us an anatomical specimen. On the 29th Dr Joan Deyman made his first demonstration on him in the Anatomy Theatre, three lessons altogether". The entry also notes that Dr Deyman was presented with six silver spoons worth 31 guilders and 19 stuivers in recompense for his three demonstrations.

From 1690 until 1841 the painting hung in the surgeons' guild room in the Nieuwe Waag where it was badly damaged by fire. It subsequently passed through several hands and for a period was in the South Kensington Museum in London. It is presently owned by the city of Amsterdam and can be seen in the Rijksmuseum.

The painting is shown on stamps issued by the Republic of Togo in 1968 (Stanley Gibbons 598 and 600, Scott 648 and C93).

L F HAAS

